

## Conference Paper

# Conditions of the Effective Formation of Legal Consciousness of Students By Means of Psychological Training

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## Abstract

The article considers the conditions of the effective formation of legal consciousness of students through psychological training. The study included ascertaining and formative stages. 60 students aged 20 to 22 took part in it.

At the ascertaining stage, R.R. Muslumov's method of study of legal consciousness of personality was used to determine the levels of formation of the legal consciousness components of students. It was established that the formation of all components of legal consciousness among students (legal knowledge, legal attitudes, attitudes towards law, and attitudes toward legal institutions, legal activity and legal motivated cognition) was at an average and high level.

At the formative stage, psychological training was used, which was aimed at developing legal consciousness and legal competence of students. The authors note that the most effective means of forming legal consciousness is psychological training based on the cognitive-behavioral approach, which suggests that a person can learn new social skills, emotions and new ways of thinking through the learning mechanism. Within the framework of the training, the work is focused on behavioral reactions and internal attitudes. As a result, qualitative positive results were obtained on the scales "legal activity" and "motivated cognition".

Conditions for the effective formation of legal consciousness (which include interactivity, reality, relevance, success, emotionality and modernity) were generalized and identified in the group work. While recognizing the importance of educational work, the authors point out that the development of legal consciousness of students also depends on other external (family, conditions in a particular university, friends, etc.) and internal (character, personality characteristics, etc.) factors. It is not enough simply to form legal knowledge - it is important to nurture the legal consciousness, legal beliefs, lay the foundation of behavior on the basis of law observance.

**Keywords:** Legal consciousness, legal competence, legal activity, legal socialization, legal motivated cognition, legal attitudes, psychological training.

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## 1. Introduction

The problem of formation of the legal consciousness of students is due to the complex criminal situation in the country, the wide spread of legal nihilism and criminal subculture. A number of studies establish that there is an increase in the "risk group" among students and that flaws in legal consciousness are common. Therefore, one of the urgent problems of vocational education is the formation of legal behavior of the future specialist, which is inextricably linked with the level of legal consciousness. A number of studies show that the complexities of legal socialization of students can be caused by a whole complex of factors and ultimately can lead to deformations of the legal consciousness, including manifestations of extremism [16].

Legal consciousness is a complex socio-psychological phenomenon, which includes philosophical, legal, socio-political and moral aspects. However, it should be noted that legal consciousness is also a subjective, social and psychological phenomenon. It is more correlated with the essence of law, with a subjective understanding of lawfulness and legal feasibility than with individual legal norms [4].

S.S. Alekseev emphasizes that the key point of legal consciousness is the recognition of the values of natural law, human rights and freedoms, as well as ideas about the current positive law and how it corresponds to natural law, legal values and ideals [1].

For a psychological analysis of the concept of "legal conscience", let us turn to the works of A.N. Leontiev, in which sensual tissue, meaning and personal sense stand out as constituents in the structure of consciousness.

Sensual tissue is defined as the "matter of the image" - the images are "woven" from it and cannot exist without it. It is a system of all sensations of a person from different senses. Meanings exist in the consciousness of the individual as a generalized reflection of the most essential properties of the world, "an ideal form of existence of the objective world, its properties, connections and relationships, revealed by the cumulative social practice" ([8], p. 141). Sense is determined by A.N. Leontyev as "meaning to me", i.e. as subjective-personal significance of a phenomenon for the subject, conditioned by their need-motivational sphere. A.N. Leontiev writes: "... if external sensibility connects meanings with the reality of the objective world in the mind of the subject, then the personal sense connects them with the reality of the subject's life in this world, with its motives. The personal sense *creates the bias of the human consciousness*" ([8], p. 134).

V.P. Zinchenko added another component to A.N. Leontiev's idea of the structure of consciousness - the "biodynamic tissue" of movements and actions, which he understands as a generalized expression of various characteristics of objective action, which

is the "matter" not of the image itself, but of the objective actions and movements that build this image. Structure of consciousness by V.P. Zinchenko includes two layers of consciousness:

1. existential consciousness (consciousness for being), including biodynamic properties of movements, experience of actions and sensual images;
2. reflective consciousness (consciousness for consciousness), including meaning and sense. Meaning is the content of social consciousness assimilated by man –operational, subject, verbal meanings, everyday and scientific meanings - concepts. Sense is the subjective understanding and attitude to the situation, information. The epicenter of consciousness is the consciousness of one's own self. Separation of one's self from the non-self is the main criterion for the beginning of the formation of consciousness and personality [5].

Consciousness is understood not as a passive contemplation, but as an active quality, which gives the person the opportunity to transform the world. Each act of consciousness always contains three components: cognition, experience and attitude. Each of these components can play a certain role in various acts of consciousness, but the essence of consciousness is that these three components are always merged in any mental act. The aforementioned structures of consciousness allow the study of consciousness as an ideal image of the world and a psychological process.

Within the framework of this study, we proceed from the basic principle of the psychological science - the unity of consciousness and activity. This principle consists of the fact that consciousness develops in the process and as a result of activity and realizes, manifests itself in it. With regard to the issue at hand, it means that the structure of individual legal consciousness can be learned by the results of functioning, its final products, i.e. it is necessary to consider the functional and psychological structure of legal consciousness

In scientific literature, this position was expressed and applied for the first time in the studies by G.H. Yefremova and A.R. Ratinov [10–12].

The structural components of the legal consciousness of the individual are:

1. cognitive (legal thinking, legal views and beliefs, the amount of legal knowledge and skills);
2. emotional-value (legal feelings, legal values, legal value orientations);
3. active-practical (motivation of lawful behavior, legal attitudes, habits and skills of lawful behavior) [6].

Before becoming an incentive and a regulator of lawful behavior, legal knowledge should find its place in the individual's values, tie with the emotions, become an inner conviction, gain a foothold in the habitual form of behavior [13].

Of course, legal consciousness in real life is not structured. The determination of structural elements in legal consciousness contributes only to an understanding of its role and place in the life of man and society [1]. The social environment is given special importance in this case, since it connects psychophysiological and social realities through a linguistic system [15].

To understand the process of formation of legal consciousness, it is necessary to consider the concept of "socialization".

The socialization of the individual is the process of realization by the person (citizen) of his social role and place in the social structure and society. It involves the development of self-consciousness of a representative of certain social groups, active inclusion in social relations and filling them with personal content [2]. Also, many scientists agree that the basis of legal consciousness is laid precisely in the social process - legal socialization (O. A. Gulevich, E. O. Golynchik, A. R. Ratinov, L. A. Yasyukova, E. S. Cohn, J. L. Tapp, S. O. White and others) [7].

The goal of legal socialization is to form a person's lawful behavior, to provide a certain level of legal consciousness, to ensure psychological and legal development of the individual, to achieve high legal culture.

Legal consciousness is connected with socialization in two ways. Firstly, life experience and practice influence the formation of the individual's attitudes and relationships. The content of the person's legal consciousness (legal awareness, assessment of legal reality, motivation for lawful behavior) depends on their social ties, on the degree of involvement in the legal culture of society, as well as on the involvement in antisocial groups that affect the grasping of legal information. Secondly, legal consciousness not only reflects the legal experience of a person, but also motivates their behavior [2].

It should be noted that legal socialization is inextricably linked with the moral formation of the individual. Only a moral person can voluntarily control their behavior by social standards. The moral person is an individual with a developed personal social self-control. The development of a mechanism of personal self-control is the basis for legal socialization of the individual [4].

Thus, the formation of an individual legal consciousness occurs in the process of socialization. The experience of performing certain actions in the legal sphere is an integral part of the social and individual experience of the individual [3]. Consequently,

such a systemic personal quality as legal activity is a characteristic feature of the formed legal consciousness and a high level of legal socialization.

Legal activity can be defined as a system quality of the individual, which determines the person's readiness and ability to operate in the legal field. It is manifested by exercising a person's legitimate rights and performing obligations in accordance with the fundamental principles of law: democracy, humanism, legality, equality, justice, unity of rights and obligations [9].

In our opinion, the most effective means of forming legal consciousness is psychological training based on the provisions of the cognitive-behavioral approach. This approach suggests that a person can learn new social skills, emotions and new ways of thinking through the learning mechanism, i.e. new modes of behavior are formed as a result of the habitual reaction of a person to external conditions.

Formation occurs when the conditioned stimulus combines with the unconditional one as a result of learning, when various actions or reactions are supported by a positive stimulus in the process of learning. Also, learning occurs as a result of observation. In this regard, the training focuses on behavioral reactions and internal attitudes. In the context of training, a low level of legal consciousness is considered as a result of inadequate and incorrect learning.

Thus, the behavior of the participant is the object of influence in the process of psychological training. Therefore, the work in the form of training not only effectively facilitates mastering of the legislation basics and enhancing the competence in the field of law, but also shapes the participants' skills of self-control and assessment of their own emotional state, activates the need and desire to uphold justice, defend one's interests and apply the acquired knowledge in practice.

## 2. Methodology and Procedure of the Study

The purpose of this work is to study the conditions of the formation of components of the legal consciousness of the student's personality and to evaluate the effectiveness of the use of psychological training in the formation of legal consciousness and legal activity.

60 students of the Ural Federal University participated in the study. The gender composition of the sample: 18 men and 42 women. Age of the study participants: from 20 to 22 years old.

At the ascertaining stage, the study of the components of the legal consciousness was carried out using the "Analysis of the components of legal consciousness" method (Muslumov R.R.).

The method is aimed at studying the following scale-components of legal consciousness:

1. Scale «knowledge of law» is aimed at studying the general spectrum of legal views. Examples of the questions: «A person should be held accountable both for action and for inaction», «Even if you are suspected of committing a crime, you have the right to refuse to talk to the police», «Online distribution of pirated movies is a crime», etc. The scale shows the general level of knowledge of law.
2. Scale «attitude to the law as a whole» is aimed at clarifying the nature of the attitude to the general principles of law, the degree of acceptance. Examples of the questions: «Compliance with all legislation norms is very difficult», «The study of laws must begin as early as possible», «Freedom and law are always opposed to each other».
3. Scale «attitude towards the institutions of law» analyzes attitudes towards certain representatives of executive power, sources of sanctions, for example, «In my opinion, honest and conscientious people work in the police».
4. Scale «legal attitudes» studies the level of the formation of legal attitudes. Examples of the questions: «I support people who actively defend their rights», «If I saw that a crime was being committed, I would call the police».
5. Scale «legal activity» shows the degree of desire to apply legal norms in real life. Examples of the questions: «If you forget about your rights, they can be violated», «I always try to fight injustice», «Mass actions for defending people's rights are useless».
6. Scale «motivated cognition» determines the level of maturity of the legal position, the ability of the subject to put the law above their own convictions, guided by the law as a criterion of justice. Examples of the questions: «If a person commits a crime out of noble motives, he must be acquitted», «Only judges can pronounce a verdict; they are the most objective», «A person like me would get leniency in sentencing».

**The formative stage** was carried out in accordance with the author's program for the formation of the legal consciousness of students. The program was developed with the purpose of significant changes in the level of legal consciousness and legal

competence of the participants. It was repeatedly tested on various audiences, taking into account the age and the interests of participants, as well as the conditions of its holding.

At the formative stage, the group was divided into experimental and control ones. The division was made randomly, with 30 people in each group.

The training uses such methods as: mini-lecture, discussion, role-playing game, training exercises, conversation, brainstorming, analysis of legal incidents, work with normative acts and others.

The training's theme is aimed at meeting the actual needs of young people and fitting their personal qualities. Thus, the knowledge of the law corresponds to psychological skills of communication, the evaluation of legal actions – to the control of emotions, the assessment of their own legal actions – to the self-control of emotions, the application of the law in practice – to time management skills, etc.

A similar approach was applied by the authors earlier and was proved to be successful ([17], p. 4092).

There are the following criteria for determining dynamics of the work:

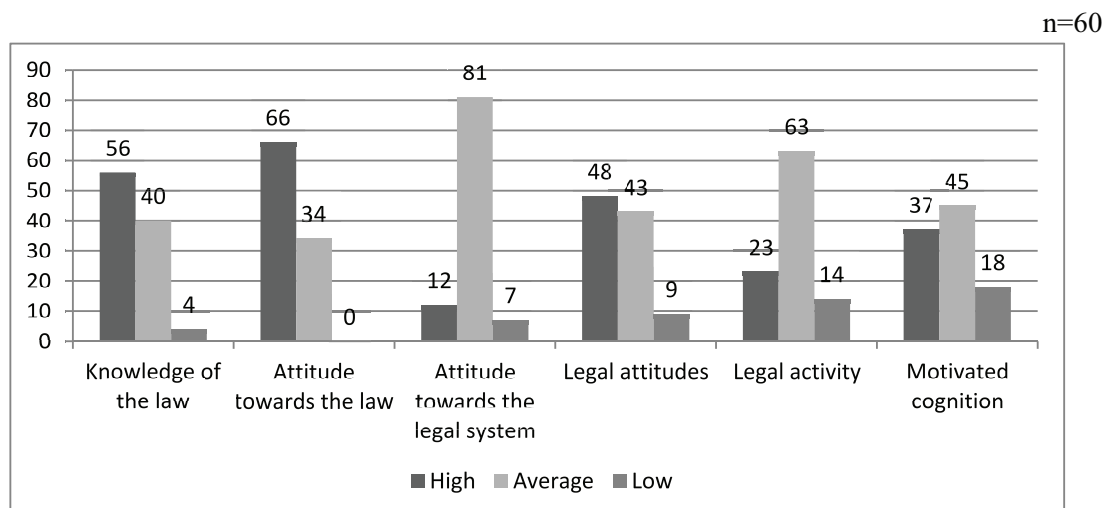
1. Criteria reflecting the structural and content side of the legal consciousness (legal knowledge, legal attitudes);
2. Criteria characterizing the motivational side of the legal consciousness (reduction of conflict, socially mature behavior, development of learning motivation, etc);
3. Criteria revealing the functional-behavioral side (level of self-control, self-esteem, the locus of control, level of social activity).

**At the control stage**, the diagnostics of the components of legal consciousness was re-conducted. The obtained data was processed with the statistical package Statistica6.0.

### 3. Results and Discussion

The results obtained at the ascertaining stage of the experiment can be called satisfactory, since the level of the formation of components of legal consciousness is average and high throughout the sample. Only 7% of respondents demonstrate a negative attitude toward legal institutions, unformed legal attitudes. The majority is well-oriented in the system of law; they know the basic legal norms (Fig. 1).

Correlation analysis (Pearson correlation coefficient) allowed us to evaluate the internal connections between the components of the legal consciousness of students.



**Figure 1:** Results of the «components of legal consciousness» method among students before the training, %.

The knowledge of the law positively correlates with legal attitudes (0,448 with  $p \leq 0.01$ ), which means that the successful study of the legal norms makes it possible to understand specific mechanisms of the exercise of rights more clearly. Legal attitudes also positively correlate with attitudes towards legal institutions (0,511 with  $p \leq 0.01$ ) and legal activity (0,563 with  $p \leq 0.01$ ). Legal activity implies the strong desire and the ability to assert one's rights, therefore, in our opinion, it seems logical that it correlates with the indicator of the formation of legal attitudes.

Institutions of law and attitudes toward law are generally positively correlated (0,518 with  $p \leq 0.01$ ), which is most likely due to the fact that most students do not distinguish between the norms of the law as a whole and the organizations that implement them.

The attitude towards the law is positively correlated with the motivated cognition (0,400 with  $p \leq 0.01$ ), which means that students who generally share legal principles agree that they can be the object of legal proceedings and do not require special treatment. The scale of the legal motivated cognition shows the respondent's mature position with respect to the law, the possibility to put the law above one's own beliefs, which almost always involves a positive attitude towards the legal system as a whole. The motivated cognition and legal attitudes of the individual are also positively correlated (0,483 with  $p \leq 0.01$ ).

During the data processing, we were able to identify the negative correlation between the level of assertion of one's own mental abilities and the attitude towards the institutions of law (0,519 with  $p \leq 0.01$ ). That is, people who set high goals for their intellectual development are not inclined to trust the law enforcement system.



**After the training**, dispersion analysis was used to test the effectiveness of formation of the components of the legal consciousness of students. The results of the analysis showed progress in two components of the legal consciousness: legal activity and motivated cognition. The obtained data are presented in Figures 2 and 3.

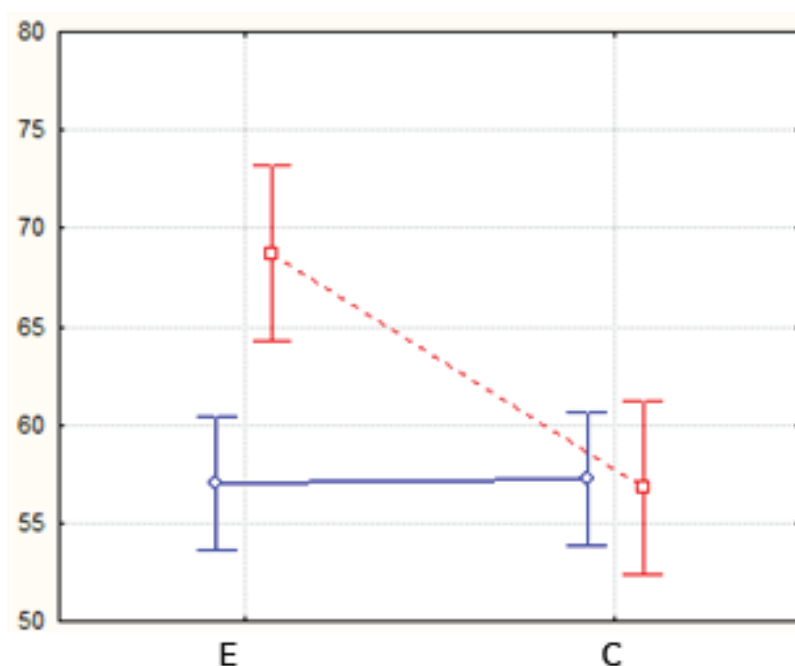
n=60

Gr: OLS average

Wilks's lambda =,59111, F (2,57)=19,714, p=,00000

Decomposition of the hypothesis

Vertical columns are equal to 0.95 confidence intervals



**Figure 2:** The results of a dispersion analysis on a scale «Legal activity». Note: here and below; E – experimental group; C – control group; - - - - - results after the formative experiment; ——— results before the formative experiment.

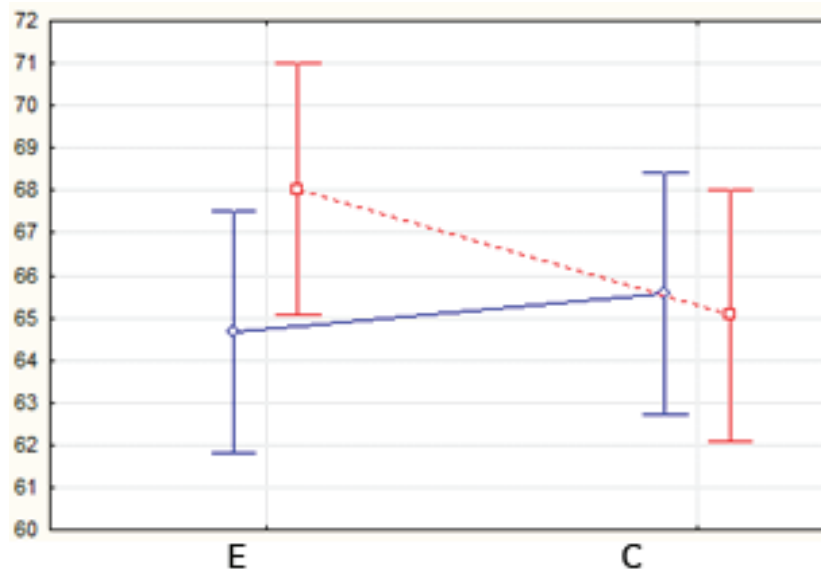
It can be argued that the results of the work indicate a qualitative change in the indicators of legal activity and motivated cognition among the participants of the experimental group.

## 4. Conclusions

Thus, the conducted study confirmed the effectiveness of the use of psychological training for the formation of legal consciousness among students. It should be noted that in the context of this paper we focus primarily on individual established forms of interaction between students, subject to qualitative feedback from the coaches. For

n=60

Gr: OLS average  
 Wilks's lambda =,86640, F (2,57)=4,3946, p=,01679  
 Decomposition of the hypothesis  
 Vertical columns are equal to 0.95 confidence intervals



**Figure 3:** The results of a dispersion analysis on a scale «Motivated cognition».

example, we confirm D. Dewey's conclusion that the established norms and rules of work in the training group are of far greater importance for mastering the rules than just a verbal report on their existence [14].

Students, despite the fact that they had previously had a fairly good knowledge of legal norms, also showed the dynamics in mastering specific mechanisms of protecting their rights. They showed their readiness to protect the rights and interests of other people, showed a high level of the formation of legal attitudes at the end of the studies.

In our opinion, the issue of finding optimal mechanisms for the formation of the legal consciousness of the individual remains debatable. However, the following conditions of the formation of legal consciousness in the form of training are unambiguous at the moment:

1. Emphasis on interactive forms of exercises aimed at increasing the unity of participants and developing communication skills, which develops the skill of listening to other people's opinions. It has a positive effect on group dynamics in general and forms a belief in the voluntariness and coherence of the group's beliefs about the rules of interaction.

2. Role-playing of real life situations allows the participants to acquire skills of using this knowledge in different life circumstances.
3. Analysis of actual life situations of the participants helps them become emotionally involved and concentrated on the problems in question. According to the participants, it builds a sense of involvement, of their own initiative in the analyzed situations.
4. Showing an example of successful problem solving helps to establish valuable types of actions and behavior. It forms the skill of finding the right solution in real life situations.
5. Focusing attention on the emotional response of participants allows to form positive motivation and attitudes, to create a safe, friendly and comfortable atmosphere in the group.
6. Focus on the actual challenges of the time. It forms an adequate idea of the modern world and helps the participant feel confident in their abilities.

The development of the legal consciousness of students is undoubtedly a complex and contradictory process that requires further serious and in-depth analysis. During the analysis of the effectiveness of the process of legal socialization, it is necessary to rely not only on the study of the forms of academic work, but also on a multitude of other factors, both external (family, conditions in a particular university, friends, etc.) and internal (character, personality characteristics, etc.). Constant educational and educational efforts, as well as social, economic, organizational and legal measures at the level of the whole society are needed to improve the legal consciousness of students. It is especially important to note that it is not enough simply to form legal knowledge - it is important to nurture the legal consciousness, legal beliefs, lay the foundation of behavior on the basis of law observance.

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